



Priorities Plan
2026 - 2028



TERRITORIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The District of Saanich is within Coast and Straits Salish territory, the traditional territories of the **ləkʷəŋən** (Lekwungen) peoples known today as Songhees and Esquimalt Nations and the **WSÁNEĆ** peoples known today as **WJOŁEŁP** (Tsartlip), **BOKÉĆEN** (Pauquachin), **STÁUTW** (Tsawout), **WSIKEM** (Tseycum), and **MÁLEXEŁ** (Malahat) First Nations. The First Peoples have been here since time immemorial and their history in this area is long and rich.

Executive Summary

The **Priorities Plan 2026-2028** (Priorities Plan) outlines the District's key actions to improve housing outcomes. It updates actions from the Saanich Housing Strategy (Housing Strategy), to respond to recent changes in the housing context, and set clear priorities for the next three years.

The Housing Strategy, endorsed by Council in 2021, consists of 73 actions over a 10-year framework in four phases. All Top 12 priority actions and Phase 1 actions have been completed or are underway. The completion of these actions removed several major barriers and resulted in significant improvements to Saanich housing policies and procedures, enabling more housing supply and diversity.

In addition to the Saanich policy context changing, several changes to provincial legislation and federal housing programs have occurred. To respond to the changing housing and policy context, and to capture Saanich's ongoing housing commitments, a review and prioritization of the remaining Housing Strategy actions was required.

The 34 actions in the Priorities Plan utilize a range of local government tools, including policy and regulations, financial support and incentives, advocacy, and partnerships. The actions are grouped into seven Focus Areas and include both new initiatives and ongoing work. Together, these actions will advance more affordable, inclusive and secure housing across all Saanich neighbourhoods, addressing the District's key housing objectives.

The Priorities Plan is endorsed alongside the Housing Strategy serving as a detailed workplan between 2026-2028. This timeline aligns to the timing of the provincial Housing Target Order, and the federal Housing Accelerator Fund. Following completion of these programs in 2028, a new period of planning and strategizing will occur.

Table of Contents

1.	The Housing Context.....	8
	District of Saanich Housing Policy Framework	8
	Provincial Legislation and Federal Programs	9
2.	Housing Reports and Commitments.....	10
	Housing Needs Report	10
	Housing Target Order	10
	Housing Accelerator Fund	11
3.	Priorities Plan 2026-2028.....	12
4.	Actions.....	13
5.	Monitoring.....	19
6.	Timing.....	20

1- The Housing Context

Housing plays a critical role in well-being, and access to secure and affordable housing impacts the health, vibrancy, and economic resiliency of our communities. The District's Official Community Plan (OCP) sets out housing direction, including increasing supply to meet latent and future demand; supporting a range of housing that can accommodate people of different ages, incomes, household structure, and physical and social needs; and seeing housing above all as the foundation for a healthy, prosperous, and sustainable community.



District of Saanich Housing Policy Framework

Since the Saanich Housing Strategy was endorsed, the District has adopted significant policy, procedural/process, and regulatory changes to address housing issues. Two foundational planning documents, the Official Community Plan (OCP) and the Housing Needs Report (HNR), were updated in 2024. In addition, the District has initiated or completed all Top 12 and Phase 1 actions of the Saanich Housing Strategy, with nearly half of all 73 actions either completed or in progress. The completion of these actions has resulted in significant change to the Saanich housing context, including:

- ▶ Providing clarity and certainty through OCP policy and land use directions that prioritize expanding housing supply and diversity, protecting and increasing rental housing, and supporting non-market housing
- ▶ Improving development approvals processes, including through supporting digital applications and review processes
- ▶ Adding to the diversity of housing in Saanich neighbourhoods through designing zoning for small-scale multi-unit housing
- ▶ Facilitating development and providing land/leases for non-market housing on Saanich-owned property
- ▶ Supporting tenants at risk of eviction through the Tenant Assistance Policy and subsequent bylaw
- ▶ Supporting affordable housing development by significantly reducing approval times by pre-zoning up to the maximum height and density in the OCP (Rapid Deployment) and delegating development permits for non-market housing developments
- ▶ Reducing costs and financially supporting non-profit housing providers with supports including Development Cost Charge (DCC) waivers, grants from the Saanich Affordable Housing Reserve Fund (SAHRF), and permissive tax exemptions, among others
- ▶ Improving housing data capture and developing monitoring and reporting programs to track progress on housing objectives
- ▶ Undertaking District-wide housing commitments under the Housing Accelerator Fund and provincial Housing Target Order

Provincial Legislation and Federal Programs

Recent amendments to the Local Government Act aim to improve housing delivery by requiring local bylaws to focus on proactive planning and minimizing rezonings. Key amendments include refining the Housing Needs Report legislation, setting housing targets, requiring zoning for infill housing, and enabling local governments to better protect tenants during redevelopment.

The District embraces these changes, recognizing the advantages of proactive planning to significantly increase housing supply. By requiring proactive strategies, setting housing targets, and streamlining approval processes, local governments are encouraged to utilize all available tools to facilitate housing development.

Both provincial and federal governments offer funding programs for various housing types, including affordable, supportive, rental, and cooperative housing. The District aligns its programs and regulations with these government initiatives, supporting both for-profit and non-profit housing providers to leverage funding/financing and accelerate construction. Continued alignment with senior governments and other partners is essential to support new housing supply in the District.



Local Government Role in Housing

Through the Saanich Housing Strategy and the OCP, the District recognizes that as a local government, we have a critical role in supporting secure, long-term housing for residents. At the local government level, this happens largely through policy and regulation that supports housing supply, diversity, and affordability. Municipalities are responsible for determining land uses, and in turn housing capacity; for setting policies, plans, and regulations that respond to local housing needs; for administering an efficient and effective approval process; to establish strategies for the use of municipal resources and infrastructure; and for playing an advocacy and partnership role with various sectors.

The District's updated policy framework, combined with the provincial and federal advancements, have highlighted the positive influence of systemic changes across levels of government in increasing a diverse housing supply.

2- Housing Reports and Commitments

Saanich's housing goals are informed by data, research, community input, and collaboration. The following reports and commitments help guide Saanich's housing policies and land use regulations.

Housing Needs Report

The Housing Needs Report (HNR) outlines and analyzes current and future housing needs. It identifies existing and projected gaps in housing supply by collecting and analyzing quantitative and qualitative information about local demographics, household incomes, housing stock, and other factors. The HNR also includes detailed information on the key areas of local need, the type of units required (unit sizes), and core housing need.

As shown in Table 1, for the District of Saanich, the total housing need estimated between 2021-2041 is 23,559 units, including units for people experiencing homelessness, rental housing, and supply that will provide residents with additional housing choices.

Component	5 Year Need (2021 - 2026)	20 Year Need (2021 - 2041)
A. Supply for Extreme Core Housing Need	511	2,043
B. Supply for Persons Experiencing Homelessness	291	581
C. Supply for Suppressed Household Formation	520	2,078
D. Supply for Anticipated Growth	5,054	13,624
E. Rental Vacancy Rate Adjustment ²⁸	50	202
F. Additional Local Demand Buffer	1,258	5,032
Total New Units	7,683	23,559

Source: Housing Assessment Resource Tool HNR Calculator³⁰

Table 1: Summary of Total Housing Need (Housing Needs Report, November 2024)

Housing Targets

In 2023 the District received a Housing Target Order (HTO) from the provincial government. The HTO, together with the Housing Supply Act, requires that the District approve occupancy on 4,610 units between 2023 and 2028. The cumulative annual targets are shown in Table 2.

Year 1: 440	Year 2: 1,041	Year 3: 1,882	Year 4: 3,045	Year 5: 4,610
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Table 2: District of Saanich Housing Targets (Province of BC)

Table 3 shows housing target guidelines included in the HTO, which specify the units by size, tenure, and the number of below market and supportive rental units.

Total Units	Units by Size			Units by Tenure		Rental Units by Market Rate		Supportive Rental Units
	Studio / 1-bed	2-bed	3 or more beds	Rental	Owned	Below Market	Market	
4610	3001	780	828	2495	2115	1161	1334	131

Table 3: District of Saanich Housing Target Guidelines (Province of BC)

Housing Accelerator Fund

The District is a recipient of federal funding of nearly \$15 million through the Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF). The District has committed to eight initiatives that will accelerate the delivery of housing supply and has committed to approving building permits on 1,727 units between 2024 and 2027.



3- Priorities Plan 2026-2028

The Priorities Plan 2026-2028 outlines current housing priorities. Phase 2 and Phase 3 actions from the Housing Strategy have been reviewed, edited and aligned with the Housing Strategy Guiding Principles and Focus Areas through a series of steps:

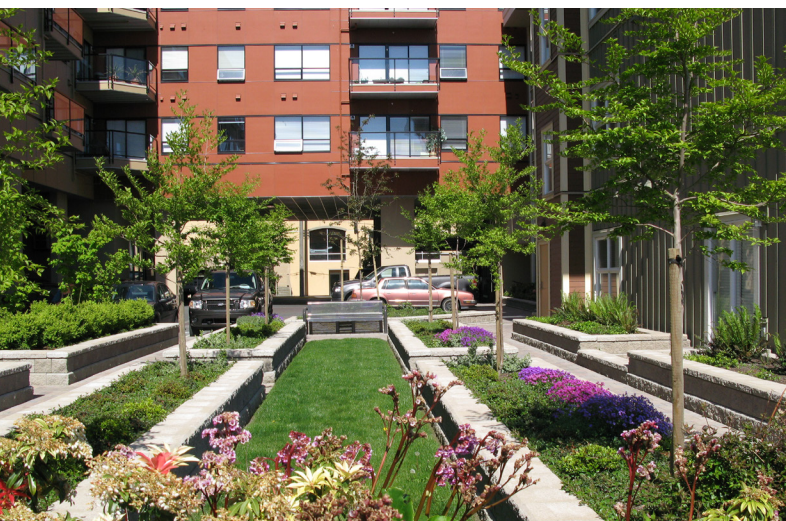


- ▶ Actions were reviewed and either revised, set aside, or integrated into other District workplans. Actions with similar objectives were grouped together.
- ▶ Actions were prioritized for implementation between 2026-2028. 'Ongoing' actions are defined as those that are now part of the District's routine operations.
- ▶ Actions were grouped according to the seven Focus Areas.

In total, there are 34 actions. Actions include both ongoing, foundational work of the District, and project-focused work to be completed over the next three years.

Priority actions include a reference to actions in the Saanich Housing Strategy. The references provide additional details about the priority.

Several actions from the Saanich Housing Strategy are not directly included in the priorities for the next three years. These actions remain in the Saanich Housing Strategy and may be brought forward if/ when housing needs change.



4- Actions

Focus Area 1: Increase affordable and supportive housing			
Action		Housing Strategy Ref.	Timeline
1.1	Support alternative forms of tenure and affordable homeownership Support innovative models of tenure and homeownership (e.g., community land trust, co-operative housing, limited-equity model, non-profit homeownership) that provide affordable alternatives to market housing.	HS 1.3 A	2026
1.2	Continue Rapid Deployment implementation Continue to monitor the implementation of the Rapid Deployment program. Conduct a 2-year review and make necessary changes.	HS 1.2 A	2026
1.3	Consider opportunities for affordable housing on surplus lands Advocate to senior government for assistance to support affordable housing development on surplus institutional, faith-based, and government owned lands. Further develop District policies and supports for non-market housing on institutional land.	HS 5.1 A	2027
1.4	Explore role in non-market housing delivery Explore additional opportunities for the District to be involved in the delivery of non-market housing, to increase the share of non-market housing in the District's housing supply. For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working to build capacity in the non-profit sector Partnering to pilot unique models of non-market housing delivery Supporting non-profits/co-operatives in acquiring land including through opportunities on larger, comprehensive development plans. 	H.S. 1.1 C, 1.1 D, 4.6 C	2028
Ongoing			
1.5	Prioritize the development of non-profit housing Continue to prioritize the non-profit housing sector as the primary pathway for securing long-term affordable and supportive housing in Saanich through strategic supports such as a dedicated planning resource, priority reviews, pre-zoning, grants, and tax exemptions.	HS 1.2 A	Ongoing
1.6	Investigate non-market housing development opportunities on Saanich-owned land Continue to consider non-market and supportive housing opportunities for surplus or under-utilized Saanich-owned land, prioritizing housing that addresses groups disproportionately represented in Core Housing Need.	HS 1.1 A, 1.1 B	Ongoing

1.7	Collaborate with community social agencies Collaborate with community social agencies such as Greater Victoria Local Immigration Partnership, Victoria Native Friendship Centre, and Social Planning Council and support their efforts to provide housing and assistance to vulnerable populations.	HS 1.2 C, 2.4 B	Ongoing
1.8	Co-locate affordable housing with community facilities Investigate opportunities to co-locate non-market housing as Saanich facilities are redeveloped.	HS 1.1 B	Ongoing
1.9	Use Saanich Affordable Housing Reserve Fund to support new non-market housing Continue to offer grants under the SAHRF policy and evaluate the future of and inputs to the fund.	HS 1.2 A	Ongoing

Focus Area 2: Promote and protect rental housing

Action		Housing Strategy Ref.	Timeline
2.1	Continue to protect tenants Transition the Tenant Assistance Policy to a Tenant Protection Bylaw and monitor the implementation. Conduct a 2-year review and make necessary changes.	HS 2.3 B	2027
Ongoing			
2.2	Support and incentivize secure purpose-built rental Continue to prioritize new secure purpose-built rental housing, through measures such as OCP policy support and CAC exemptions.	HS 2.2 A	Ongoing
2.3	Retention of affordable purpose-built rental Support the retention of older, affordable market rental buildings through policy. Align with the rental protection fund, or other programs, to support the acquisition of existing buildings by community land trusts and non-profits.	HS 2.3 A	Ongoing
2.4	Plan for purpose-built rental Through detailed community planning work, provide a land use framework that will support viable, purpose-built rental.	HS 3.3 B, 4.4 D	Ongoing
2.5	Monitor the market conditions for rental housing Continue to monitor rental market conditions and rental financing, funding, and standardized design programs from senior levels of government. Align Saanich's direction as necessary.	HS 2.2B, 7.1 A	Ongoing

Focus Area 3: Support housing diversity and increase supply

Action		Housing Strategy Ref.	Timeline
3.1	Undertake family friendly housing policy Develop tools and incentives to ensure multi-family buildings include basic features to make them livable, family friendly, and senior friendly.	HS 3.2 A, 1.2 C, 3.2 B	2026
3.2	Continue SSMUH implementation Continue to monitor the implementation of SSMUH for unintended impacts and revise the zoning bylaw as necessary. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct a two-year review of regulations in 2026/2027 Consider the use of design catalogues and other tools to influence design through zoning 	HS 3.1 F, 3.1 E	2026
3.3	Complete CCV and Neighbourhood Planning Continue Centre, Corridor, and Village planning, and undertake Secondary Corridors and Hubs planning to provide capacity for latent demand, future housing need, and diversity of housing supply.	HS 3.3 A, 3.3 B, 3.3 F, 1.4 B	2028
Ongoing			
3.4	Support student housing with post-secondary institutions Engage with post-secondary institutions to support on-campus student housing. Explore a university district that would concentrate supportive uses including housing, research, and commercial.	HS 3.3 E	Ongoing
3.5	Housing Target Order tracking, reporting, and messaging Continue to improve tracking and monitor housing progress through permits issued at all stages of the development process. Maintain quality reporting to the Provincial government, and messaging to the public, on the Housing Target Order.		Ongoing
3.6	Housing Accelerator Fund actions and reporting Continue to monitor HAF progress, advance work on achieving commitments, and maintain reporting to the Federal government.		Ongoing

Focus Area 4: Reduce barriers to housing development

Action		Housing Strategy Ref.	Timeline
4.1	Advance housing equity in the Zoning Bylaw During the Zoning Bylaw modernization, review for housing equity, flexibility, and improved housing outcomes. Remove discriminatory and exclusionary regulations that perpetuate inequity.	HS 4.5 A, 4.5 B	2027
Ongoing			
4.2	Continue to streamline and digitize the development review process Implement further improvements and efficiencies to the development approval process, including further work with referral departments, engaging external agencies, and updating bylaws and processes to reflect housing priorities.	HS 4.1 C	Ongoing
4.3	Align with senior government programs Monitor and continue to align with senior government funding programs to optimize affordable housing, rental housing, and modular housing investment in the District. Continue to advocate for additional funding from senior government for housing supply that addresses Core Housing Need.	HS 4.3 C, 5.2 A	Ongoing
4.4	Accelerate non-market housing projects Continue to refine development review processes across all departments for non-market housing developments (through Rapid Deployment and priority review under the Non-Market Housing Policy) to improve outcomes.	HS 4.1 B	Ongoing
4.5	Explore and pilot pre-zoning Continue to explore locations and housing forms for pre-zoning to streamline the development approvals process and incentivize housing types and forms that meet housing needs.	HS 4.3 B	Ongoing
4.6	Continue infrastructure planning Continue to advance infrastructure planning to accommodate new growth and provide more public facing information to support the development sector. Seek infrastructure funding from senior governments and take advantage of government programs.	HS 4.1 C, 5.2 A	Ongoing

Focus Area 5: Strengthen partnerships

Action		Housing Strategy Ref.	Timeline
5.1	Promote housing opportunities for community organizations and institutions Support organizations to retain their community assets through encouraging partnerships, facilitating discussions, and providing guidance on District supports for non-market housing on institutional lands.	HS 5.1 A	2027
Ongoing			
5.2	Foster relationships with non-profits and funders Continue to partner and foster relationships with non-profit housing developers, funders, and other agencies.	HS 5.1 D, 5.1 C, 5.1 E	Ongoing
5.3	Support for Indigenous Housing Support local First Nations and Indigenous non-profit housing organizations by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Priority review and development management supports ▪ Consideration of housing development opportunities on Saanich-owned land ▪ Continued relationship building ▪ Supporting culturally appropriate housing models 	HS 5.1 B,	Ongoing
5.4	Participate in supports to homelessness Participate in government and community interventions needed to ensure adequate policies and resources to address homelessness: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Participate in a regionally coordinated response to homelessness ▪ Work with partners to provide nightly shelter spaces and extreme weather shelter spaces ▪ Support opportunities for new supportive housing ▪ Work with provincial and federal governments for long-term solutions 	HS 1.4 A, 5.1 E	Ongoing

Focus Area 6: Enhance community engagement

Ongoing		Housing Strategy Ref.	Timeline
6.1	Provide reporting on housing needs and housing progress Provide information to Council, staff, the public, and Community Associations, on housing need and progress. Maintain a focus on meeting housing needs and reducing Core Housing Need.	HS 6.1 A, 6.2 A, 6.2 B	Ongoing

Focus Area 7: Understand housing demand and address land speculation

Actions		Housing Strategy Ref.	Timeline
7.1	Review short-term rental regulations Review short-term rental regulations in the context of new provincial legislation and enforcement tools to protect long-term rental housing while considering rental income for homeowners.	HS 7.1 E, 1.4 C	2026
Ongoing			
7.2	Monitor senior government programs aimed at minimizing speculation Monitor senior government programs, including the Speculation and Vacancy Tax, and BC Home-Flipping Tax, to better understand their impacts on land value speculation and on housing affordability in Saanich.	HS 7.1F	Ongoing
7.3	Monitor market conditions Continue to monitor market conditions for both non-market and market development, to better understand and respond to the impacts of plans, policies, and regulations on development viability.	HS 7.1A	Ongoing

5- Monitoring

This suite of reports provides the Council, staff and residents of Saanich with valuable information and analysis around the current state of housing and future housing objectives.

Report	Description	Frequency / Timing
Annual Housing Progress Report (District of Saanich)	An annual report that includes detailed information on rezoning, development permit, and building permit approvals. Includes detailed progress on Housing Strategy actions, and housing indicators, such as vacancy rates, housing prices, etc.	Annual / Q1
Housing Needs Report (Province)	A legislated report that includes census information about housing and current population, population and household projections, and identifies the number of housing units needed for 5 and 20 years following the most recent census.	Every 5 years
Housing Target Report (Province)	A legislated annual report. Includes information on development permit, building permit and occupancies. Includes information on recently amended policies and regulations that enable increases to housing supply.	Annual / October
Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF) Report (CMHC)	An annual report using the form provided by CMHC to report on building permits issued according to housing type. Includes information on the status of the eight initiatives in the action plan. The report is a part of the commitment for receipt of HAF funding.	Annual / February
Ongoing policy and regulatory monitoring	When new policies or regulations are introduced, Council typically directs staff to analyze and review following a specified timeframe, to determine if outcomes are being achieved.	Typically a 2-year period

Table 4: Housing Monitoring and Reporting

6- Timing

The Priorities Plan, HAF and HTO will all complete in 2028, marking the completion of a significant period of work on housing objectives.

Priorities Plan									
2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Saanich Housing Strategy									
Housing Strat Top 12									
		Housing Strat Phase 1							
					Housing Strat Phase 2			Housing Strat Phase 3	
			Housing Accelerator Fund						
		Housing Target Order							
			Housing Needs Report	OCP/ Zone/HNR Alignment				Housing Needs Report	OCP/ Zone/HNR Alignment

Table 5: Saanich Housing Programs

